



Bridgeport Sites  
968 Fairfield Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06605  
(203) 330-6000

46 Albion Street  
(203) 330-6000

1046 Fairfield Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06605  
(203) 330-6054

510 Clinton Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06605  
(203) 366-4000

743 South Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
(203) 330-6010

**School Based  
Health Centers**  
Bassick High School  
Central High School  
Blackham School  
Read School  
Roosevelt School  
Cesar Batalla

**Homeless Shelters**  
*Bridgeport Sites*  
CASA  
Helping Hand  
Pivot Ministries  
Prospect House  
Brooks Street Shelter  
Harrison Apartments  
*Fairfield Site*  
Operation Hope

**WIC Site**  
1020 Fairfield Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06605



## Testimony to Health Sub-Committee members of the Appropriations Committee

From  
**Katherine S. Yacavone, President and Chief Executive Officer**  
**Southwest Community Health Center, Inc.**  
**46 Albion St.**  
**Bridgeport, CT 06605**

### Impact of the Governor's Proposed Budget Cuts

The Governor is proposing to cut \$1.7 M for each of the next two fiscal years from School-Based Health Clinics (SBHC) funding under the Department of Public Health (DPH). I urge the Legislature to oppose this detrimental cut that will directly harm some of Connecticut's most impoverished and vulnerable children by curtailing or eliminating access to medical, behavioral health, and dental services offered to students through school-based health centers.

Southwest Community Health Center (SWCHC) serves over 22,432 persons, of which 84.5% live in Bridgeport, the State's largest city. Our clients are overwhelming poor with over 89% of all clients live at or below 200 % of the Federal Poverty Level. Over 60% are of all clients are enrolled on Medicaid and 21.5% are uninsured. The majority of our clients are persons of color. SWCHC delivers comprehensive care from 18 DPH licensed sites offering barrier-free, 24/7 accessible care.

Since 2009, Southwest Community Health Center (SWCHC) has provided medical, dental, and behavioral health services to Bridgeport students at its SBHCs, which are **often the only source of health care for these children.** Our SBHC sites include 2 High Schools (Bassick and Central) and 5 pre-K -8 grand schools. Once a child is enrolled in a SBHC he/she is assured of continuity of care when schools are closed, as all clients can access any site or service. **In 2016, 2,190 were seen in our SBHCs, all enrolled with parental consent. SWCHC rendered 10,594 visits to these students.** Our 5 APRNS delivered over 2,491 physical exams, gave 6,511 immunizations, and diagnosed 1,790 upper respiratory infections, colds, wheezing, and asthma. Our 5 Master's level, licensed therapists treated 1,773 children diagnosed with depression/anxiety and PTSD was diagnosed in 301 students. All services are aimed at enhancing well-being and preventing further mental health problems that if left untreated, can lead to future aggressive and violent actions. The type of violence no one wants to see happen again.

SWCHC's initial DPH SBHC grant for \$600,000 supported 50% of the cost of operating 5 SBHCs. SWCHC must support the remaining operating expenses. SWCHC fully supports the additional 2 SBHCs we launched since 2009. Revenue is generated through third party billing. DPH grant support is critical to SBHC operation, as SWCHC cannot bill uninsured students for services rendered. While uninsured rates have decreased under the ACA, the uninsured rate at Central High is

18% and at Blackham School is 20%.

However, over the past few budget cycles SWCHC's DPH SBHC funds have been eroded from its **original \$600K** :

- As of SFY 6/30/14 SWCHC funds were reduced to by \$595,124
- As of SFY 6/30/16 funds were reduced to \$573,059
- And as SFY 6/30/17 funds dropped to \$539,471
- **The proposed \$1.7M cut for SFY ending 6/30/18 will drop support down to \$485,524**

**Hence a loss of \$114,476 over the past few years, just for SWCHC's program – will make it near impossible to continue to have providers staff the 5 SBHCs.** As of last October, I had to eliminate 2 days a week of APRN time at Read Elementary School of offset a \$33,588 loss of funds.

These cuts come at a time when SWCHC has expanded its behavioral health program with funding through Department of Children and Families (DCF) and launched a highly successful, evidence-based trauma intervention program for children in grades 4-8 (CBITS). Dental services have just been expanded at the new Roosevelt elementary school, HIV testing is offered at our high school sites, and just two weeks ago an 18 year old student was diagnosed with HIV disease and within 24 was enrolled in our comprehensive Ryan White HIV/AIDS program.

Given the trauma and dysfunction too many of our children grow up with, SBHCs provide essential safe havens – of care and support. In particular, SWCHC's synergy with DCF to reduce trauma symptomology highlights the important role SBHCs play. Integrated medical and behavioral health, a focus of the new PCMH+ program, save lives as well as health care costs. This is worth the investment of DPH funds.

SBHCs must be sustained at the existing funding level- SBHC programs in the State can't survive the massive proposed operational cuts. **With the Governor's proposed cut, I will have to eliminate an additional 4 days of provider time from these SBHCs. Would you cut behavioral health services? Medical services? Why are we in the position of sacrificing access to health care for our most needy children?**

**I urge you to reject this proposed cut and preserve funding for SBHCs.**

**Bridgeport's children thank you for listening to this testimony.**

2/23/17